OLD TALES OF JAPAN

VOLUME II

BY
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YOSHINOBU SAKAKURA

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FOREWORD

by

N. MAKINO

When I was ten years old, in 1871, I went to America where I studied at a school in Philadelphia. The impression of those years is indelible and has helped me to know America. During my public life of half a century my early training has done me good service.

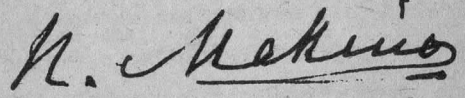
Much of our past failings in foreign affairs must be attributed to our meagre outside knowledge owing to geographical and historical reasons, but now under new world situations we must cultivate more intimacy and become more confiding with other people. We must show ourselves as we are in order to convince other nations of our peaceful aspirations.

The above remarks are perhaps too far fetched in this connection, but such ideas were in my mind when my niece, Mrs. Yasuda, told me of her plan to publish these stories. I was truly delighted and encouraged her to complete the series.

The booklet is fittingly illustrated by pictures

destined to help the child grasp the true purport of the stories. Grown-ups will find the tales reminiscent of their own childhood love of bedtime stories, demonstrating the universal truth that children are the same the world over.

The author is fully alive to the significance of our present situation and is eager to render every possible service for the improvement of our foreign relations. For this end, I also wish her success.



For you
my little reader
I have written
these tales

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MOMOTARŌ

LONG, long ago, there lived a good old man and a good old woman.

They lived cosily in a little house with a thatched roof. This house stood at the

foot of a pleasant green mountain, and near it a clean rippling stream wound its way. The two old people were happy together, but they longed for a child and this was their one great wish.

One day the old man Ojiisan went up the hills to cut wood, and the old woman Obaasan took her washing down to the stream.

It was a fine day and Obaasan hummed a tune in a quavering voice as she rinsed the clothes.

Jabu—jabu—jabu—sounded the clear lapping water. But presently besides this sound Obaasan heard another.

It seemed to say—

'Donbura kokko sukkokko.'

Can you manage to say it, my little readers? Try, because all Japanese children say it.

'Donbura kokko sukkokko.

Donbura kokko sukkokko."

Obaasan looked up, and there in the distance she saw a big rosy red peach floating on the stream. It came drifting towards her on the running water, and the nearer it came the louder she heard:

'Donbura kokko sukkokko.

Donbura kokko sukkokko.'

When it was nearly in front of her

Obaasan stretched out her hands and with a flop placed it on top of her washing. My! What a magnificent juicy peach it looked, and goodness, how heavy it was. Obaasan could hardly lift it, but she was beaming with joy for she thought—

Now I have a wonderful present for Ojiisan. How pleased he will be! How delicious he will find it after his strenuous day's work."

So Obaasan carried the peach home carefully. She placed it on a chopping board. By it she laid a big knife and waited for Ojiisan.

Ojiisan came home mopping his brow

and looking very hot and thirsty.

"Tadaima." he said, which means, "I've just returned."

Obaasan, looking very pleased, tugged him by the sleeve and said

"See what I have for you here."

"Why what a big peach it is, and how good it looks!" exclaimed Ojiisan, "How clever of you Obaasan to think of it. Just the very thing for me now."

Obaasan told him how it came floating towards her down at the stream. The two decided to eat it at once.

Ojiisan tucked up the sleeve of his

kimono and took the knife to cut it open.

But as soon as he had touched the top of it, there was a great big pop—and Ojiisan and Obaasan nearly fell back with surprise, for the big peach flew open of itself and—inside they saw the sweetest chubbiest little baby boy.

The little baby had soft glossy hair and round, laughing brown eyes. As he was very fat there were dimples at his elbows and rings round his wrists. All the time he gurgled and smiled and kicked out his legs at Ojiisan and Obaasan.

Ojiisan and Obaasan looked at each other.

They looked at the darling little baby and their hearts were so full of delight they could scarcely keep from shedding tears of joy.

From that day the little house was full of baby laughter and happiness.

They named the boy 'Momotarō' which means Peach Boy. They brought him up with great care and love. The boy was always happy and grew up very sturdy and strong.

Perhaps I ought to say that sometimes he was naughty, for that would be more natural as a child, but I have never heard of it anywhere.

Momotarō was not only strong, but good

tempered and very gentle and tender towards Ojiisan and Obaasan. He did their work for them and would never let Obaasan carry anything heavy. He liked running errands and helping people, so every one loved him.

You see what a good boy he was?

Years passed, and when Momotarō was a big strong boy, one day he told his foster parents that he wanted to set out on an expedition to Onigashima.

Now in Onigashima which means Ogres' Island there lived hundreds of horrible demons. They had horns on their heads and their skin was coloured red and blue and green.

They plundered villages and killed innocent people. They carried off pretty girls to serve them. Every day they ate and ate their stolen goods, and drank cup after cup of wine. At night their horrible laughter filled the air.

When Ojiisan and Obaasan heard Momotarō's decision they were alarmed for the safety of their dear boy, but Momotarō was very firm and they could not make him change his mind.

"Pray do not worry dear Ojiisan and Obaasan. I will come back—there is no cause for fear. I cannot bear to think of all the poor people trembling on account of those wicked demons."

So Obaasan made kibi dumplings which were Momotarō's favourite dish. She put them in a big bag for him to carry, and dressed him in his best suit.

Ojiisan made him a lovely flag and on it he wrote 'Nippon ichi' which means 'The Strongest in Japan.' He also gave him his sword and with this as his sole weapon Momotarō started out.

Ojiisan and Obaasan stood at their little gate and looked after him for a long long while. It was difficult for them to realize that he had left them.

When Momotarō had gone for a short way

he met a faithful looking dog.

"Wan, wan, wan," cried the dog. "I know you are Momotarō. Where are you going Momotarō?"

"I'm going to punish the demons in Onigashima."

"What are you carrying there by your side?"

"Ah, these are the best kibi dumplings in Japan."

"Give me one Momotarō. I will be your follower."

Momotarō, who loved animals, gave the dog a dumpling and the dog followed him.

When he had gone on a short way again

he met an agile looking monkey.

"Kya, kya, kya," cried the monkey, "I know you are Momotarō. Where are you going?"

"I'm going to punish the demons in Onigashima."

"What are you carrying there by your side?"

"These are the best kibi dumplings in Japan."

"Give me one Momotarō. I will be your follower."

Momotarō gave the monkey a dumpling and the monkey followed him.

Momotarō went on again. This time he

met a friendly pheasant.

"Ken, ken, ken." cried the pheasant, "Where are you going Momotarō?"

"I'm going to punish the demons in Onigashima."

"What are you carrying there by your side?"

"These are the best kibi dumplings in Japan."

"Give me one Momotarō. I will be your follower."

Momotarō gave a dumpling to the pheasant and the pheasant followed him.

Momotarō with his followers crossed deep valleys and climbed steep hills.

At last they came to the sea, and far in the distance they saw the rugged outline of Onigashima.

Now the demons were enjoying themselves in their wicked ways. Many were drinking wine some were sharpening their swords some were planning to plunder.

Momotarō prepared to row over in a boat, and told the clever pheasant to fly across and tell the demons he had come. So the pheasant saluted his master, spread out his wings, and was soon a speck in the sky.

Presently the pheasant returned.

"Master, master! They say they are

ready. But they do not know who you are. Be quick master!"

At once Momotarō stepped into his boat. The dog and monkey took turns rowing, and in a short time they had landed.

The pheasant swooping down pecked at the guard. The nimble monkey climbed over the wall and opened the big iron gates and Momotarō and the dog rushed in.

Red and blue and green demons gave hideous growls and with a great noise they rushed out to fight Momotarō.

Now the dog darted in and out of their legs and bit as many as he could. The

monkey jumped high and low and scratched all over. The pheasant pecked their heads from above. Added to this Momotarō with his good sword cut left and right.

But there were hundreds of these demons and they all had sharp weapons. It was hard on Momotarō and his faithful followers.

Still the brave lad fought on. He fought further and further in, until he found the horned hairy red chieftain standing ready at the far end of the hall. He lurched forward towards Momotarō, and a terrible fight ensued between the two.

You would have clenched your fists and

prayed for our dear little Peach Boy if you had been there! Many a time Momotarō thought that he was done for—but no—he would not give way, and finally making use of every bit of his strength he brandished his sword high above him and brought it down on the demon's neck.

Momotarō caught up the awful head and hurried out to the court where the fight was still raging at its height and shouted,

"Behold your chief!"

The demons all looked up horrified, cowards that they were! They began to shiver and shake. All fell on their knees and bowed deeply

and begged for mercy. They brought gold and silver and many kinds of treasure to Momotarō, and pleaded for pardon. They promised they would never do anything wicked again.

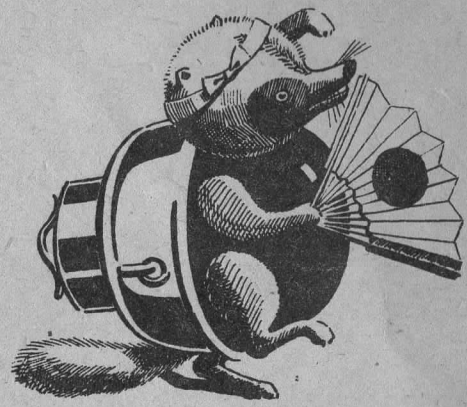
So Momotarō took a cart-load of treasures and returned home.

The dog drew the cart—the monkey pushed it—and the pheasant pulled it by a rope.

Momotarō walked beside it with the lovely flag fluttering in the air. 'The Strongest Boy in Japan' was the Peach Boy.

Grownups and children alike sing songs about Momotaro in Japan. Would you like to listen?.....

BUNBUKU CHAGAMA



IN the temple of Morinji lived an old bonze. He liked collecting all sorts of curios, and among them was a very old cauldron.

This bonze also liked drinking Japanese

tea, so one day he called his little priestlings to his room.

"Come, come my little boys. We will have nice hot tea together. Heat up some water in the old cauldron that I like so much."

"Hai, hai," they cried, and busily set to work to oblige their master. They brought charcoal to the hearth, and with fans they kindled sparks of fire. They filled the old cauldron with water and set it on the top. Presently the water began to sizzle, but dear, oh dear, what was appearing on the sides of it?

A little fuzzy head—a bushy tail and four paws.

"Ouch! Ouch! Dear me, dear me. Excuse me honorable abbot. I feel too hot. This fire is dreadful! I'm burning!" said a shrill little voice.

"Ha!" cried the venerable bonze.

And, "Hey!" shouted the priestlings, all jumping up very much excited, for what else was the cauldron but a mischievous little badger.

You know in old Japan naughty badgers used to take various forms to trick people.

Well the badger couldn't stand it. He jumped out of the hearth and ran around with the boys in hot pursuit. They tucked up their long black gowns, and with brooms

and sticks ran after the badger as fast as their short legs could carry them. Thus they finally held him fast, a subdued cauldron, and brought him back to their master.

"We cannot leave this treacherous creature here in our temple." said the bonze.

And of all unexpected things, just then they heard someone in a high pitched voice calling outside,

"Kuzui—kuzu—i, Rags and bones, rags and bones—"

"The very man we want!" exclaimed the bonze. "Call him in, call him in."

And the cauldron was sold to a poor

rag man, who knew nothing about it.

Now this man, though poor was very honest. He lived all alone in a tumbledown hut. He could not think what he could do with an iron cauldron and was much depressed. There were many holes in the paper sliding doors of the hut. The wind blew through the cracks in the walls and the straw mats were bare and dirty. The rag man shivered in his thin clothes and curled up on his bare mat for the night, leaving the old cauldron by his bedside.

The moon rose cold and yellow in the sky. It was midnight. The poor man gave

little shivery grunts in his sleep.

Suddenly, "Mr. Rag man! Oh, Mr. Rag man! Wake up, wake up!" cried a shrill voice.

The rag man jumped up, rubbed his eyes and gave a gasp of surprise for there near his bed sat the cauldron-badger.

"Do not be frightened, Mr. Rag man. I will not be naughty. I will not harm you," the little fellow urged with many bows. "Please let me stay with you for a while. I will help you, for I am Bunbuku chagama, and though I am really a badger I had to take this form to escape from some cruel

boys who wanted to ill-treat me. Now I do not know what to do with this awkward thing on my back. But I am a lucky cauldron. I think I can make some money for you. Listen—in the morning we will start a show, for I have rare tricks to show people. They will flock together to see me and you will be rich."

The poor man could scarcely believe all this, but he was poor and simple minded, so he bowed his thanks in return and promised he'd do everything just as the badger wished.

The next day on open ground, the rag

man put up a poster for the badger.

'Bunbuku chamaga' it read. And there he stood clapping two wooden sticks together to attract attention.

"Come everybody. Ladies and gentlemen. Boys and girls. Come and see my 'Bunbuku chamaga'—his tight rope dancing, his tricks, his tranformations!"

People stopped and pressed in and were astounded for the badger was really marvellous when displaying his many feats and tricks. Onlookers poured in from near and far and soon the whole ground was packed with people. Money poured in, and everything

turned out just as the badger had said.

Everyday Bunbuku chamaga went through his tricks over and over again, and never complained of being tired. The rag man became rich and before long was able to live in a comfortable house of his own.

But one day when the show closed, and the rag man rushed behind the curtain to thank his dear friend as he always did he was confronted by a solitary cold iron cauldron.

Bunbuku chamaga had closed up.

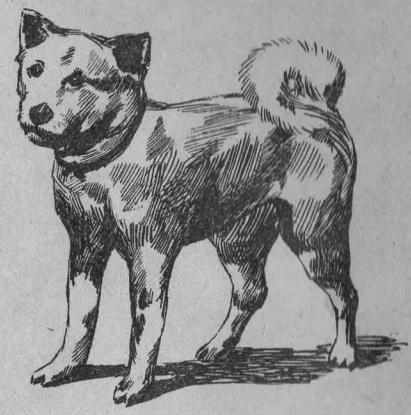
So our dear man carried it home with great care, and when the story grew famous he took it back with him to Morinji, with

half of the money he had earned and returned it to the old bonze with many thanks.

There it still remains to this day, only as it is now a rare treasure it rests on a thick purple cushion and people gaze upon it with respect.

Thus ends the story of Bunbuku chagama.

HANASAKA JIJII



THIS is the story of a hard working kind man, a little white dog and cherry blossoms. The man loved his dog exceedingly. They were great friends and were always

seen together.

The country in Japan was lovely just then. It was warm and sunny and the earth yielded so much fruit that it kept the good man very busy every day.

On such a bright morning the little white dog came leaping up to his master and tugged at his sleeve.

"Come master—please—come with me!" his shining eyes seemed to say.

The good man straightened his back, brushed the dust from his worn out trousers and gave a gentle laugh,

"Well well my little Pochi, how excited

you are today. What is the matter, and where do you want to take me?"

The good man let himself be led away, so the little dog trotted proudly ahead until it came to a certain place hidden under the bushes in the good man's property.

"Koko hore wan wan, dig here, dig here, wan, wan, wan." he then barked, and placing his two paws together scratched the ground with great energy.

After watching him for a while amazed, the good man fetched a spade and dug up the earth.

Heavens! What a lot of gold coins he

found! Here was money, and to spare. He could now hire men for his work, and live a rich man's life.

He did so, and being a kind man was generous to everybody, giving large sums to the poor. All the village people liked him, and he was the happiest of them all living with his faithful little white dog.

But this is not the end of my story, for there lived another man next door. He was a greedy man and though he had received much from the good man he was not satisfied. He hated his neighbor for being so lucky. He was also jealous of the little white dog.

One day he came to the fence of the good man and bowing in a sullen fashion said,

"Good morning, my friend. What a lucky man you are and what a faithful companion you have in that little dog. Will you not lend him to me for a while."

The good man did not see why he should do so especially as he did not like the greedy man, but this thought troubled him so, he said—

"You shall have Pochi—just for this morning, but take great care of him. He is far from strong. Be sure to bring him back as soon as he tires you."

Poor little Pochi trembled all over, while a string was tied to his collar. He gave his master such a sorrowful look as he was pulled away that the good man had to turn away and close his eyes. He was already sorry that he had promised to lend his little dog.

As soon as the greedy man was at a safe distance he began to jerk the dog's string and whispered angrily,

"Fetch me money! Fetch me money! You'll do me a good turn too—you will!"

Pochi had to be dragged along all the way, for he wanted very much to run-away.

Coming near the greedy man's house he

laid his little head down, put his tail tight between his hind legs and whining unhappily refused to move. Seeing this the greedy man fetched a spade and dug up the earth with great effort, but he only came across dirty stones, broken china and lumps of clay.

This made him so angry that he rushed at the dog and struck him with his spade once—twice—thrice, and again many times. And alas! Fragile little Pochi yelping with pain rolled over and died.

In the evening the bad man came back with the cold lifeless body of Pochi and muttering an apology left hurriedly. He must

have been a little frightened.

The good man was filled with grief. It seemed to him that this misfortune was all his fault. All night he stayed awake beside poor little Pochi in humble repentance while bitter tears of loneliness trickled down his face.

At last the sun rose and shone upon his garden, and the birds twittered.

The good man shook off his sadness, and looked out of his paper doors. Presently, he took a spade and dug a hole just outside his room, and there tenderly buried Pochi. Over the grave he raised a mound and on it planted a little pine tree.

Now this pine tree grew very rapidly—in fact it shot up like a bean stalk. Before many months had passed it was a great stalwart tree with branches that spread out in all directions. The wind blew through them and whistled and whispered, and the good man looking up in astonishment, seemed to hear his little dog crying—"Cut me down, cut me down and use me dear master! Good will come of it to you."

Well as it was nearing the New Year and as New Year's Day in Japan is a grand occasion, he cut down the tree and made a wonderful Japanese rice-mortar out of it. He

thought he would then make rice cakes for his friends and relations.

Pettarako, pettarako, went the pestle.

And the good man was astonished to see each time fine white rice flowing from the bottom of the mortar. It overflowed and spilled all over the floor and flowed on and on, until the good man had a rich store of rice.

This strange occurrence reached the ears of the bad man, and you may be sure he did not waste time to come and borrow the mortar. But in vain—on the contrary his pestle struck stones and dirt and hurt his hands and arms so much, that in a terrible

temper he smashed the wooden mortar to pieces and burnt it up to ashes.

"Oh my poor wooden mortar!" sighed the good man, "I will at least take the ashes back to Pochi's grave."

But as he was crossing his garden, a gust of wind blew the ashes from him, and the most extroardinary thing happened.

All the bare trees sprang into wonderful blossom! Where all around everything was bare and shivering, in the good man's garden alone it was spring!

This was such a delightful sight that the good man clapped his hands with delight,

and taking the rest of the ashes in a basket cried out,

"Hanasaka-jijii! Hanasaka-jijii! I'm a flower-blossomer! Who would like to see a bare tree bloom!"

At this time the lord of the province happened to pass by returning from a hunting trip. He came galloping by in a very fine fashion with his suite following him, and when he saw the good man, he cried out aloud in a gay voice,

"Come here my good fellow and let me see what you can do."

So the good man climbed up a big bare

tree nearby, and sprinkled it all over with ashes from his basket.

At once the tree blossomed forth as one of the prettiest cherry trees imaginable.

All the lord's followers, and the lord himself wondering, said "Oh!" and struck their hands together joyfully.

They were so pleased with the good man that they took him with them to the lord's mansion and treated him to a wonderful meal bestowing on him many presents of goodwill.

Now my little readers, although, I think you can guess the rest of the tale, we will return to the greedy man.

This time he came himself and taking away the ashes went his way shouting—

"Hanasaka-jijii! A flower blossomer! Who would like to see bare trees burst into bloom!"

He was so sure of himself that when he caught sight of the lord of the province he ran towards him, bowing and showing his basket of ashes.

"Let him come and sprinkle more of our bare trees and make them bloom." said the lord thinking he was the same man.

The greedy man waved his arms and threw the ashes all over the trees by the

wayside, but the wind blew and scattered them in all directions. Some blew into the lord's eyes making him blink with pain. And all the followers cried, "Oh! What horrible dust has been thrown in our eyes."

"What a nasty man he is!" they all cried out together, "Surely this is not the kindly man we met before."

So a few of them ran and kept a tight hold of him. And they realized that he was a very disagreeable man. They bound him with a rope and led him away. Thereupon the bad man wept bitterly, thinking of the punishments that had come upon him, and

cried, "Have pity on me! Have pity on me."

But he was a coward, don't you think so? And he richly deserved to be punished.

So he was tried and sent to prison for his misdeeds.

Let us hope that when he was released he had become a better man—with better thoughts.